

## Transportation

Whether you're driving to and from work, delivering goods for your business, or taking the family on vacation, we all know the delays and frustration of being stuck in traffic. As our region's population grows, we must work to solve our transportation problems and create new jobs by improving our nation's roads, railways, airports, and ports.

Serving on the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I have proposed and supported commonsense solutions to address current and future transportation needs throughout our region and nation. All across Southwest Washington, from Olympia to Vancouver, White Pass to Raymond, Stevenson to Long Beach, I'm proud to have helped bring federal resources to widen roads, upgrade bridges, deepen channels, and maintain harbors. I have also worked to help make these projects more efficient and economical by leading efforts to streamline permitting while still protecting our environment.

Transportation should also be a central focus of homeland security. With the heightened state of alert following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, I have strongly supported efforts to improve security at our airports and ensure that pilots and crew receive the training, resources, and support they need. I have also insisted that we not neglect risks facing our shipyards and rail lines, all of which pose likely targets to terrorists.

### Transportation Funding

As a member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Congressman Baird is involved in addressing our nation's long term transportation needs in all forms including highways, transit, ports and maritime shipping, and aviation. According to one report, the United States faces a \$1.6 trillion deficit in needed infrastructure investment. Congressman Baird regularly meets with experts from the government and the private sector at hearings, meetings, and roundtables to try and find solutions to these challenging issues.

Every few years, Congress crafts legislation addressing highway and transit transportation needs. As a member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Congressman Baird has significant influence over this legislation.

In 2005, a five-year bill was signed into law that included funding for a number of provisions that help Southwest Washington. In this bill, Congressman Baird secured over \$45 million for high priority projects in our region that will improve local traffic congestion and safety, create thousands of local jobs, and ensure government efficiency. The projects Congressman Baird was able to secure needed funding for include:

- I-5 Columbia River Crossing between Portland and Vancouver
- I-5/Salmon Creek Area Improvement Project in Clark County
- 18th Street between 87th Avenue and NE 192nd Avenue in Clark County
- SR 14 Corridor between Camas and Washougal
- I-5/SR501 Interchange Replacement in Ridgefield
- Confluence Project
- Mill Plain Blvd Improvement in Clark County
- I-5/SR 503 Access Study and Development Plan in Cowlitz County
- SR 503 Widening in Woodland
- SR 4/411 Urban Area Congestion/Renewal Plan in Kelso
- SR 432 Improvements in Cowlitz County
- I-5 Widening from Centralia to Grand Mound in Lewis County
- Chehalis Community Pathway
- Lewis and Clark Scenic Overlook
- Lewis and Clark National Historical Park Transit
- Ilwaco Park and Ride
- Willapa Hills Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail
- Puget Island Ferry Landing
- Chehalis-Western Trail "Bridging the Gap" Project
- Port of Olympia Intermodal Project
- Bus Replacement in Thurston County

#### Columbia River Navigation Channel Deepening

In the Northwest, the Columbia River is the lifeblood of communities from the Tri-Cities to Vancouver. Many states in the Midwest also depend on the Columbia River to get their wheat, corn, and other products to the global market. Approximately 43 percent of all

U.S. wheat exports and 11 percent of all U.S. corn exports pass through the Mouth of the Columbia. Our ports are already a hub for trade, but we have the capacity to make our region a world-class center for international commerce. To do that, we need to deepen the shipping channel. Since ocean-going cargo ships have grown larger, deepening the Columbia River navigation channel from 40 to 43 feet has become necessary to more fully load these ships. When those ships are able to carry more cargo, thousands of Northwest and Midwest farms and businesses exporting their products through the Columbia-Snake River system will realize transportation cost savings that will help them compete in the global marketplace.

In his first year in Congress, while serving on the Water Resources subcommittee, Congressman Baird secured \$183 million in authorization to move forward with channel deepening. Respectful of the concerns of downriver communities and the environment, Congressman Baird simultaneously led efforts to ensure the project would be done in an environmentally sound way and would not pose dangers to fishermen and others who depend on the river for a living. The Channel Deepening project includes restoration of tidal marsh, wetlands, native riparian vegetation, shallows, and fish access to spawning streams.

Since securing the initial project authorization, Congressman Baird has helped obtain tens of millions of dollars in appropriations for the Army Corps of Engineers to carry out the deepening work and ecosystem restoration. Using federal funds already appropriated by Congress, along with Oregon and Washington state matching funds, the Corps of Engineers should be able to finish deepening about two-thirds of the navigation channel by late 2007, early 2008.

#### Water Resources Development Act

As a Member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Congressman Baird was also successful at obtaining authorization for several local projects in the House version of the Water Resources Development Act. Congressman Baird secured approval for the extension of a provision to allow public entities to expedite the Army Corp of Engineers' permitting process; a study of increased silt deposits in Baker Bay and Ilwaco Harbor; the planning, design and construction of a campground at the western tip of Hamilton Island in Skamania County; an effort to protect homes and property on Puget Island threatened by severe erosion problems; a project that will provide coastal erosion protection - including ecosystem habitat restoration - for the tribal reservation of the Shoalwater Bay Tribe and vicinity on Willapa Bay; and a provision to develop a long-term strategy for restoring a dredged material at the Mouth of the Columbia River to prevent further erosion to Benson Beach.

#### Buy America

Congressman Baird has fought to preserve the "Buy America" provision in our federal transportation laws. The Buy America law requires that

federally-funded transportation projects use domestic iron and steel. The law was put into place to ensure that, when taxpayer money is spent on highway projects, these expenditures stimulate United States production and job creation.

Buy America is important because it helps working men and women in Southwest Washington and throughout the United States keep their jobs and earn decent, family wages. Buy America also strengthens our domestic steel industry, which is critical to our national security and necessary for our ability to rebuild after a devastating natural disaster or terrorist attack.

Congressman Baird has participated in hearings on the issue and met with the Secretary of Transportation to ensure Buy America rules are being followed. When Congressman Baird learned that some states and the Federal Highway Administration were attempting to evade Buy America requirements and use foreign steel, he introduced legislation to strengthen enforcement of the Buy America law by closing loopholes in the existing law.

#### Streamlining the Environmental Permitting Process

Protecting the environment is always a priority, but regulatory processing and permitting have become unnecessarily costly and time consuming. In recent years, Congressman Baird has organized a series of meetings throughout Southwest Washington to bring local business leaders, farmers, builders, ports and others together with federal, state and local officials to improve the permitting process. As a direct result, several federal and state agencies have made significant progress in streamlining permits, reducing application backlogs and complexity, and improving coordination to expedite the process. There is still work to be done, and much room for improvement, but Congressman Baird will continue to work with the consumers of permits and agency representatives to push for further improvements in efficiency and savings in time and money.

Additionally, Congressman Baird successfully passed two bills through the House and Senate that extended Section 214 of the 2000 WRDA bill in order to continue allowing public entities, like ports and cities, to help expedite the Army Corps of Engineers' permitting process. Under Section 214 of the 2000 WRDA bill, non-federal public entities can provide the Corps with funds to hire additional staff to process their permits. Without the extension Congressman Baird secured, the Corps' permitting backlog would increase significantly, causing serious delays for critical economic development projects. The entities providing the Corps with permit processing funds are given no preferential treatment in the review of their projects.

Department  
of Transportation

Washington  
State Department of Transportation

House  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Senate  
Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation

Washington  
Utilities and Transportation Commission

Country  
Road Administration Board

Thurston  
County Roads and Transportation Services

Lewis  
County Department of Public Works

Clark  
County Department of Public Works

Cowlitz-Wahkiakum  
Council of Governments' Transportation

Pacific  
County Department of Public Works

Skamania  
County Department of Public Works - Road Department